

The Edo Era in the History of Japanese Nationalism*

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Introduction

In 1891, Yosaburo Takekoshi, a historian of the Meiji era, wrote in a classical study about the formation of Japanese nationalism as follows,

‘Several hundred years of rival barons and two hundred years of a feudal system divided Japan into several hundred feudal domains. Each domain set barriers, suspected and were hostile to each other. As a result, Japanese in those days didn’t have the idea of Japanese nation, though they had the idea of the clan firmly. [...]

Generally speaking, nationalism in the Edo era had been small like a speck. When the U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry’s fleet appeared in the Gulf of Uruga, people were so filled with awe and hostility towards foreigners that suspicions and hostility between clans were gone. At that moment people realized that approximately three hundred clans were brothers and tens of millions of people were one nation. So the

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idea of the nation of Japan arose here¹⁾.

As well, Soho Tokutomi who was an influential journalist in the modern period of Japan said in 1893 as follows,

‘The idea of nation is a relative one. It occurs at the time when one country gets in contact with another. [...] Under the national isolation and the feudal rival baron system, it is natural that people during the Edo era lacked the idea of nation. For them, the idea of nation meant the idea of their feudal clans. Nations which they referred to meant solely their clans. [...]

However, approaches from other countries generated the notion of the foreign in the mind of Japanese. The notion of the foreign generates nationalism, and nationalism leads to unify a nation. Unifying a nation and maintaining the feudal rival baron system cannot go together. The notion of the foreign generates the notion of Japan. The day when the notion of Japan comes about is the day when the notion of clans disappears. The day when the notion of clans disappears is the day when the feudal society is overthrown²⁾.

The above classical scheme about the formation of Japanese nationalism is correct in principle. As Ernest Gellner says, ‘nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. [...] Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused

1 Takekoshi, Yosaburo, *Shin-nihonshi (New Japanese History)*. Iwanami Shoten, 2005, pp. 31-32.

2 Tokutomi, Soho, *Yoshida Shouin (Shouin YOSHIDA)*, in *Tokutomi Soho-syu*. Chikuma Shobo, 1974, pp. 169-174.

by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment³⁾. In the case of Japan, a trigger for the nationalist sentiment was the arrival of the U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry's fleet to Japan in 1853.

However, if the Japanese of those days did not have consciousness of a country as Takekoshi and Tokutomi said, why did they have feelings of nationalism in the latter period of the Edo era in order to protect their country from external pressure? Did consciousness of a nation of Japan and Japanese not exist already in the people's mind during the Edo era?

In this essay, I will explore the embryonic stage of Japanese nationalism during the Edo era. The turn to nationalism in the late Edo era didn't take place suddenly. An embryonic stage of nationalism had already existed during the Edo era. In this embryonic stage, people had consciousness of the country of Japan and shared the same culture. Because of this consciousness, people of the late Edo era could have a sense of crisis and develop nationalism when western powers approached Japan. Also, after the Meiji restoration in 1868, Japan was able to abolish the feudal system and build a unified country relatively easily.

On the other hand, in the embryonic stage Japanese people were not the nation in the modern meaning. The class system and class consciousness hindered to be the nation. The nationalism in the late Edo era was carried mainly by samurai class. Most of the people who had been governed during the Edo era were indifferent to affairs of the country in the crisis of the late Edo era and even after the Meiji Restoration. Elites of the Meiji State were dissatisfied with those people, so that they decided to change the people's

3 Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd edition. New York: Cornell University Press, 2008, p. 1.

mindset to be supportive of the country^{4,5}.

The outline of this essay is as follows. First, in order to explore the embryonic stage of Japanese nationalism, I will examine the nature of the feudal system and the policy of national seclusion in the Edo era. Then, I will point out characteristics of Japanese nationalism in the late Edo era and after

4 The embryonic stage wasn't nationalism itself. It was a preliminary step prior to nationalism. According to Anderson, the nation 'is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Community*. London: Verso, 2006, p. 6). In the embryonic stage of nationalism, the class system and class consciousness still remained, so that people didn't conceive oneself as a deep, horizontal comradeship. On the other hand, it was different from Smith's *ethnie* (Smith, Anthony, *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991). It involved more elements of nationalism than *ethnie*, for example print-capitalism, the strong central government and so on.

5 In the history of the study on the formation of Japanese nationalism, Hiroshi Mitani's *Meiji Ishin to Nationalism (The Meiji Restoration and Nationalism)* is the epoch-making work (Mitani, Hiroshi, *Meiji Ishin to Nationalism [The Meiji Restoration and Nationalism]*. Yamakawa Shuppansya, 1997). Until his work appeared, studies on the formation of Japanese nationalism had started from the arrival of the Matthew Perry's fleet to Japan in 1853 onward, or as Masao Maruyama's study, dated back to not more than seventy or eighty years before the arrival of the Perry's fleet when Russian ships appeared in the Japanese sea near the shore (Maruyama, Masao, 'Kokuminshugi no Zenkiteki Keisei [The Early Formation of Nationalism in Japan]' (1942), in *Nihon Seijishiso-shi Kenkyu [Study on the History of Japanese Political Thought]*. Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1952). Mitani pointed out the existence of 'proto-nationalism' in Japan during the Edo era. According to Mitani, 'proto-nationalism' means establishment of a prototype of the ideology and conditions of circulation of nationalism.

However, his main aim is to analyze internal and external policies on the basis of 'proto-nationalism', not to analyze contents of 'proto-nationalism' itself. Therefore he doesn't examine contents of Japanese nationalism. Also, as a result of his main aim to analyze policies of the ruling class, he doesn't refer to consciousness of the common people. It seems that he is too optimistic about making nation-state after the Meiji restoration.

I will explore not only conditions but also contents of 'proto-nationalism'. Also, there are a few differences between Mitani and me in identifying what are conditions of nationalism. In addition, I will distinguish between the country and the nation in the process of making nation-state in Japan.

the Meiji Restoration, which based on the embryonic stage.

The feudal system in the Edo era

As mentioned above, Takekoshi said that several hundred years of rival barons and two hundred years of a feudal system divided Japan into several hundred small countries, so that Japanese in those days had no conception of the Japanese nation at all. Or Tokutomi said that people during the Edo era lacked the idea of nation. Was it true that people in the Edo era who were under a feudal system lacked a sense of nation?

It was true that society during the Edo era was a feudal one. Japan was divided into about 270 feudal domains in the Edo era⁶. Each domain was autonomous. Each domain's lord had its own armed force, collected taxes from their subjects, and ran their domains by themselves.

Japanese society was not only divided horizontally, but also vertically. The class system divided the Japanese people into four main classes, which were soldiers, farmers, artisans and merchants (SHI-NOU-KOU-SHOU in Japanese), and there were discriminated groups below them. In particular, a definite boundary line had been drawn between soldiers and others. Soldiers were both soldiers and rulers. The others were people who were ruled over.

Generally, a feudal and pre-industrial society is a divided society, and it is said that in such societies nationalism does not occur. For example, Earnest Gellner points out three stages of mankind's history: the pre-agrarian, agrarian and industrial stage, and says,

'In the characteristic agro-literate polity, the ruling class forms a small

6 The number of domains changed with the times. At the time of the late Edo era, it were about 270.

minority of the population, rigidly separate from the great majority of direct agricultural producers, or peasants. Generally speaking, its ideology exaggerates rather than underplays the inequality of classes and the degree of separation of the ruling stratum’.

‘Below the horizontally stratified minority at the top, there is another world, that of the laterally separated petty communities of the lay members of the society. Here, once again, cultural differentiation is very marked, though the reasons are quite different. Small peasant communities generally live inward-turned lives, tied to the locality by economic need if not by political prescription⁷’.

Gellner says ‘[H]ad nationalism been invented in such a period its prospects of general acceptance would have been slender indeed’.

On the other hand, the feudal system of the Edo era had also a strong central government, the Tokugawa Shogunate. The Shogunate promulgated laws in force throughout the whole country, and Shogunate laws were superior to each domain’s laws. The Shogunate gave daimyos (feudal domain lords) order for daimyo's alternate-year residence in Tokyo, military duty, a territory substitute and so on. And the Shogunate issued nationwide common currencies. In this sense, Japan of the Edo era was a feudal country having a strong central government.

Also, the Edo era was a time of peace. In such a time, the letter i.e. the written words were made much of. The rule was performed by documents, not by violence. The laws were issued by a written announcement (i.e. promulgation), the tribute was assigned to each village by a document,

7 Gellner, op. cit. pp. 9-10.

the politics of the village was carried out in writing (for example, ballots on village officers), the technique of the agriculture was taught by books, and the business was performed by bookkeeping.

In such times, education was made much of in order to read and write letters. In each feudal clan, Hankohs were established. Hankoh was an educational institution that each domain established for the education of its retainers' younger people. In addition, education was also conducted widely in the so-called Terakoya. Terakoya were temple elementary schools for children of the commoner in villages. In addition, many scholars established private schools; for example Kangien by Tanso Hirose, Shirando by Gentaku Ootsuki, Suzunoya by Norinaga Motoori, Ibukiya by Atsutane Hirata, and so on. Michio Aoki (a historian) says that at those private schools young men who gathered from various areas studied together regardless of their own feudal clans, social position and generation, and exchanged information and opinions⁸.

As a result of the spread of such educational institutions, according to the calculation of Ronald Philip Dore, the school attendance percentage in the Edo era was 43% for male and 15% for female⁹. And according to the calculation of Richard Rubinger, the literacy rate of Japanese was 65% at the end of the Edo era (1850s)¹⁰. This was the number of persons with the minimum ability to read and write. However, as for the reading of Chinese characters, books used many furigana which were written next to Chinese characters to show the pronunciation. And books contained many

8 Aoki, Michio, *Kindai no Yocho (Signs of Modern)*. Shogakkan, 1989.

9 Dore, Ronald P., *Edo-jidai no Kyoiku (Education in Tokugawa Japan)*. Iwanami Shoten, 1970.

10 Rubinger, Richard, *Nihonjin no Literacy 1600-1900 (Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan)*. Kashiwa Shobo, 2008.

illustrations in the Edo era.

In addition, in the Edo era, publication in print became popular. It was said that it started with the dispatch of troops to Korea by Hideyoshi Toyotomi in 1592 and 1598. The military commander brought back xylographs and craftsmen as slaves. Once the new technique had rooted in Japan, the publishing business was established in the beginning of the Edo era. Xylograph replaced the previous manuscript written by hand, and books spread. Yozo Imada (a scholar who studies history of mass media) defines the establishment of the publishing business as 'the liberation of the classics'. The classic literatures that had belonged only to a noble circle became the classics of the Japanese people¹¹.

Benedict Anderson points out the significance of print-capitalism for making the bases for national consciousness as follows: first, it created unified fields of exchange and communication, and fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community. Second, it gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation. Third, it created languages-of-power of a kind different from the older administrative vernaculars¹². With establishment of the publishing business, in Japan of the Edo era, unified fields of exchange and communication were created, to language a new fixity was given, and new languages-of-power was created. It shaped the basis for national consciousness.

The use of the xylograph started in the field of graphics too. It was Ukiyoe

11 Imada, Yozo, *Edo no Honya-san (Publishers in the Edo Era)*. Heibonsya, 2009.

12 Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*. London, New York: Verso, 2006, pp. 44-45.

printings, which were printed by using a wood block. By the spread of Ukiyoe printings, more and more people came to be able to get a copy and to have a look at it.

The people of the Edo era shared common legislation and culture, in spite of the clan-divisions under the feudal system.

The policy of national seclusion

Tokutomi said that, under the national isolation, the Japanese in the Edo era lacked contact with other countries and contacted with solely other feudal clans, so that they were not conscious of a country and had been conscious of only their feudal clan. Or Takekoshi said that the Japanese of those days thought about their feudal clans solely, but didn't think about the country, so that nationalism was small like a speck. It was said that because Japan in the Edo era was a closed country isolated from the world, there was not the idea of a country for lacking the contact with other countries. Did the Japanese in those days really not have the idea of a country?

In order to examine the nature of the national seclusion, it is necessary to consider the foreign relations before the formation of the policy of the national seclusion and those ones after that.

Before the formation of the policy of the national seclusion, Japan had had relations with European countries. In 1543 a Chinese ship carrying Portuguese on board was cast ashore in Tanegashima-island of Kyushu, which was the first time for Japanese to get in contact with Europeans, and trade with Portugal began. About 50 years later Spaniards visited Japan, and trade with Spain began. In 1600 trade with the Netherlands and the U.K. began. These contacts with Europeans enlarged Japanese view of the world. Before contacts with Europeans, Japanese thought that the world

consisted of three countries i.e. Japan, China (including Korea) and India. After contacts with Europeans, Japanese came to recognize that the world consisted of many countries, and that Japan was one among them. The world maps produced in Japan after the 17th century bear witness to this fact.

The processes that formed the policy of national seclusion were as follows. Ieyasu Tokugawa issued a ban on Christianity in 1612 that first took effect within shogunal demesnes, then was followed nationwide in the following year. Prior to this, Hideyoshi Toyotomi had issued the 'Edict expelling Jesuit missionaries' in 1587. The reason why Hideyoshi promulgated this law was that he was surprised at knowing that Nagasaki was donated to the Society of Jesus. In addition, he felt uneasy about Christianity because it spread so vigorously that religious rebellion might happen, and about the fact that Portuguese merchants bought and sold Japanese as slaves. Such uneasiness was succeeded to Ieyasu Tokugawa. In addition, British and the Dutchmen who visited Japan after 1600 preached the risk of Spanish and Portuguese colonial policy. It was an incident of bribe by a Christian daimyo (Christian lord) in 1609-1612 (Incident of Okamoto Daihachi) that determined Ieyasu to issue a ban on Christianity finally. Thereafter, the Shogunate tightened the ban on Christianity. In 1624, Spanish ships were prohibited from visiting Japan. In 1635, the Shogunate prohibited Japanese from going abroad and returning home overall. In 1639, Portuguese ships were prohibited from visiting Japan. Meanwhile, in 1623 the U.K. withdrew from Japan voluntarily because she lost for trade competition with the Netherlands. Thus the policy of national seclusion was completed.

As mentioned above, the policy of national seclusion aimed to ban Christianity, especially Catholic. To achieve this purpose, the Shogunate prohibited the coming of Spanish and Portuguese ships and selected

countries which had relation with. As a result, Japan developed and stayed in relations with the Netherlands, China, Korea, Ryukyu (now Okinawa Prefecture) and Ezo (now Hokkaido) . That is to say, the policy of national seclusion was not a policy of isolation¹³. The Tokugawa Japan had relations with the five countries mentioned above. Information about international affairs came into Japan through the Netherlands and China under the control of the Shogunate. Books dealing with the world geography and folklore were written in Japan by Japanese. Foreign books were imported to Japan in the form of translation in Dutch and Chinese. In the end of the Edo era, Friedrich Eulenburg (a member of the mission of Prussia) wrote down that in bookstores there were many translations of European books in the fields of geography, folklore, astronomy, medicine, tactics, military and so on.

Also, as previously mentioned, world maps were made in Japan by Japanese learning from European world maps, and they progressed with the progress of European map making techniques¹⁴. And, those maps circulated among the common people in simplified versions. These facts show that Japan was not isolated from the world and that people of those days had a consciousness of Japan among many countries.

Moreover, envoys of Netherland and Korea were required to parade to the capital Edo, in order to demonstrate respect for the Shogunate. When Japanese people along roads looked at that parade, they could see people of

13 Arano, Yasunori, *Kinsei-Nihon to Higashi Asia (Early Modern Japan and East Asia)*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1988. Toby, Ronald, *Sakoku to iu Gaikou (Foreign Relations called the National Seclusion)*, Shogakkan, 2008.

14 Miyoshi, Tadayoshi, 'Sangoku kara Gotairiku e (From the view of the world consisted of three countries to one consisted of five continents)', in Arano, Y., Ishii, M., & Murai, S. edited, *Nihon no Taigai-kankei 6 (Foreign Relations of Japan 6)*. Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2010.

foreign countries and the superiority of Shogunate to other countries.

In addition, in Japan of those days, the Emperor was at a higher rank nominally than the Shogunate. The Emperor appointed the Shogunate. And the Emperor was admired by people because of an unbroken line of Emperors. Japan was considered to be a divine land because of this unbroken line of Emperors who had continued to reign for many centuries. This belief was combined with the idea of Shinkoku (divine land) created and protected by gods. This belief so prevailed in the Edo era that one farmer in the Edo era wrote down in his family precept as follows:

‘Japan is superior to all other countries. [...] From the Emperor Jinmu of the direct line of descendant of the Sun-Goddess to the current Emperor, the three Imperial regalia of Japan are succeeded for 115 generations. [...] This is a token that Japan is land of gods¹⁵’.

These words of a farmer prove the existence of consciousness of the country and a sense of superiority over other countries.

As above shows, people in the Edo era had consciousness of their own country and made a distinction between their own and other countries. They had also consciousness of superiority of their country to other countries. Japan in the Edo era already had an embryo of nationalism. That is the reason why, in an external crisis Japan was to have nationalist ideologies and movements.

15 *Yoda Choan Ichidai-ki (Yoda Choan Documents)*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1985.

The nationalism in the late Edo era

Western powers, after bourgeois revolutions in the 17-18th centuries and the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century, started to expand toward Asia and Africa for new markets and materials. Japanese nationalism developed in earnest stimulated by contacts with western powers in order to protect and keep their country independent.

It was Russia that approached Japan first. In 1792 and 1804 Russian missions came to Japan and requested to start trade with Japan. The Shogunate rejected it on the ground that it was prohibited to form an association with other countries except with the above mentioned five countries, which was the law that had been inherited from generation to generation. According to Fujita or Toby¹⁶, at these moments the policy of seclusion turned to the policy of national isolation (though, even after then, information about foreign affairs were needed and gathered in order to deal with foreign threats) .

Under these circumstances, Shihei Hayashi wrote *Sangoku-Tsuran-Zusetsu* (*Atlas of Three Countries*) in 1785 and *Kaikoku-Heidan* (*Military Strategy of Maritime Country*) in 1787-1791. He instilled caution against invasion by Russia in the former book and advocated the strengthening of national defence in the latter. The Shogunate prohibited the sale of his books immediately after publication on the ground that they mislead people, but Hayashi remade printing blocks by himself and his books became pioneer works in the field of military strategy books of the late Tokugawa era. In his books we can see consciousness of his own country and other countries and desire to protect his own country against invasion of other countries

16 See, Toby, op. cit., and Fujita, Satoru, *Matsudaira Sadanobu (Sadanobu MATSUDAIRA)* . Chuou Koronsya, 1993.

In 1823, Nobuhiro Sato wrote *Kondo-Hisaku (Secret Plan of World Unification)*. There are two notable points about his book. First, he regarded Japan as the first and fundamental country of the world, and insisted on the unification of all countries of the world headed by Japan. Second, he advocated to unify Japan under the Emperor and to enrich the country by nationalization of land, production and transportation. In his work we recognize the existence of consciousness of Japan as one country under the Emperor and consciousness of the superiority of Japan to other countries because of an unbroken line of Emperors.

In 1824 a British ship came on shore in Otsu Village in Mito Domain (now, Ibaraki prefecture), and in 1825 the Shogunate promulgated the edict to repel foreign vessels. Under such circumstances, Yasushi (or Seishisai) Aizawa, who was scholar in Mito Domain, wrote *Shin-Ron (New Argument)* in 1825. He insisted,

‘Japan is the place where the sun rises. An unbroken line of Emperors reign for centuries. The virtue of the Emperor shines and influences throughout the world.

Now, western countries move around the seven seas, and devastate many countries. How arrogant they are!

Christianity is a heretical religion. But its dogma is simple, so that people can easily be deceived by it. Be careful because western countries use the propagation of the Christian religion as a pretext to invade other countries’.

The Mitogaku (the scholarship and academic traditions that arose in the Mito Domain) represented by Aizawa’s argument influenced the Sonno-

Joui (Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians) movement and the anti-shogunate movement of the last days of the Tokugawa era, though the Mitogaku itself was a supporter of the shogunate.

In 1853 the U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry's fleet arrived off the coast of Uraga. Shoin Yoshida, a feudal retainer of Choshu Domain, hastened to Uraga and observed the scene. He was shocked by the behaviour of Perry's fleet, felt that it was too rude to be overlooked, and thought that it was right to go to war with it, but the Shogunate didn't so because it was too cowardly to do it. Moreover, when the Shogunate entered into the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the U.S. in 1858 against the Emperor's objection, Yoshida was so angry that he asserted to subjugate the Shogunate on the ground that it ignored the Emperor's will. In his actions and assertions we can recognize anger at the rude behaviour of the foreign people, and the conviction to put the Emperor higher than the Shogunate.

At the basis of the development of Japanese nationalism which started after contacts with western powers began, there was consciousness of an own country which should be protected and kept independent, and which was superior to any other country. That consciousness was the product of the embryonic stage of Japanese nationalism.

After the Meiji Restoration

In 1869, the year after the Meiji Restoration, the Meiji government implemented the Hanseki-hokan (the return of lands and people to the emperor), and in 1871 enforced the Haihan-chiken which abolished the feudal domain system and introduced the prefectural system. By these means modern Japan became a unified modern country¹⁷.

17 See, Miura, Kenichiro, 'The history of Nationalism in Japan : particularly on the formative period.' in *Hakuoh Hogaku*, vol.20-2, 2014.

On the other hand, there also were the class system and consciousness of the class in the Edo era. They remained after the crisis of the late Edo era and the Meiji Restoration. So to speak, the embryo of Japanese nationalism could help to diminish the horizontal segmentation i.e. the feudal domain divisions, but could not eliminate the vertical one i.e. the class system.

The nationalism in the late Edo era was carried mainly by samurai class. They tended not to count on commoners. For example Sanai Hashimoto (samurai from Echizen Domain in the end of Edo era) looked on the whole Japan as one family, but he did so without questioning the class system. According to Muneyuki Yamaguchi (a scholar who studies Sanai Hashimoto), Hashimoto didn't appeal to common people and didn't evaluate popular power positively at all¹⁸.

The people who had been governed were indifferent to affairs of the country in general. It is true that we can find names of common people in war dead lists of the Boshin War (Japanese civil war between Imperial and shogunate forces, 1868-1869), but most of them were commandeered as military porters or were tempted by being raised up to the rank of samurai, except for a few exceptions¹⁹. The common people didn't act along with movements of samurai in the crisis of the end of the Edo era²⁰. In the midst of the Boshin War, in Edo people talked about the war indifferently. In Echigo (now Niigata prefecture) where was a battlefield of the Boshin War, a person had written down that the role of farmers was farm working, not

18 Yamaguchi, Muneyuki, *Hashimoto Sanai (Sanai Hashimoto)*. Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1985.

19 Watanabe, Hiroshi, *Higashi Asia no Oken to Shiso (Royal Authority and Thought in East Asia)*. Iwanami Shoten, 2012.

20 Sato, Seiro, *Bakumatsu Ishin no Minsyu Sekai (The World of Common People in the end of Tokugawa and the Meiji Restoration Period)*. Iwanami Shoten, 1994.

dying by fighting.

Elites of the Meiji State felt dissatisfied with those people, because they sought to make Japan strong enough to match against western powers. Therefore, they tried to change the people's mindset to make 'Japanese nation' after the Meiji Restoration. In 1873 Toshimichi Ookubo, who was the most influential leader in the Meiji government, deplored as follows: Japan and the UK were almost the same in size, and had almost the same population. The UK dominated the world, but Japan didn't. Why? Because in the UK the people were concerned about the independence of their country in order to protect their own rights, whereas in Japan the people having a sense of nationalism were very few, so we needed to have a nation that took charge of affairs of the country, and created the polity which developed the people's rights²¹.

Not only the government official, but also the anti-government movement organizer Taisuke Itagaki said as follows: when he attacked the castle of Aizu in the Boshin War, he was surprised at the fact that only samurai were fighting, whereas common people were indifferent to it. He thought the Aizu Domain was defeated because of this indifference of common people. In order to keep Japan independent and make it rich, Japan had to make all Japanese have responsibility for the country and treat them equally²².

During the Meiji era, elites (the government official as well as the anti-government movement organizer) were keen to change the people's

21 Ookubo, Toshimichi, 'Rikkenseitai ni kansuru Ikensho (The paper on the constitutional polity)', in *Ookubo Toshimichi Monjyo (Ookubo Toshimichi Documents)*, vol. 5. Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1968.

22 Itagaki, Taisuke, 'Wagakuni Kensei no Yurai (Origin of the constitutional government in our country)' in *Meiji Kensei Keizai Shiron (History of the Meiji Constitution and Economics)*. Kokkagakkai, 1919.

mindset and make up the Japanese nation as being helpful in strengthening the country²³.

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23 For example, in 1872, the Meiji government issued the Imperial Rescript about conscription, and enforced the conscription order the following year. Conscription systems were known to be useful for formation of nations in western countries. Japan introduced a system similar to the European ones by making use of Japanese history. The emperor's rescript said that, in ancient Japan, soldiers consisted of the common people from the whole country, and they protected it. There was no distinction among classes. The Rescript said: 'Today is different from the feudal era. The soldier class is abolished. All people are the emperor's people. All people should devote themselves to the country mentally and physically'. In 1890 the Meiji government issued the Imperial Rescript on Education. In that rescript, children were taught virtues to be observed, and inspired to devote themselves to the emperor in time of national crisis.